

POSITION CLASSIFICATION GUIDE FOR DISTRICT/FIELD MANAGER POSITIONS

INTRODUCTION

A classification review of all District/Field Manager positions within the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) concluded in June 2002. Upon analyzing the results of the review, it was apparent that there was a need to publish a guide for classifying the managerial/program work of our District/Field Managers. The General Schedule Supervisory Guide (GSSG) is adequate for evaluating supervisory positions; however, the GSSG falls short when measuring program management and planning responsibilities at grade levels GS-14 and GS-15.

The Program Management Series, GS-340, has been traditionally used for District/Field Manager positions because the ability to manage programs is more important to success in the job than knowing the scientific trade or having a college major in a particular academic discipline. This GS-340 series does not contain grading criteria. In order to determine a grade under such circumstances, it is necessary to identify a related occupation that does have published grading criteria. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) calls this technique “cross-series comparison” and requires its use for all job series that do not have their own, specific published grading criteria.

OPM has issued a classification standard for a related occupation, Wildlife Refuge Management Series, GS-485. Refuge Managers manage public lands incorporated into the National Wildlife Refuge System. This standard does permit us to draw relevant job analogies. Like District/Field Managers, mid-level Refuge Managers are key members of their Bureau’s management team who must manage specific tracts of the public lands for multiple use in an era of public controversy concerning the highest and best uses of those lands. Additionally, the GS-485 standard contains specific criteria that can be used to evaluate the program management aspects of the work.

The Wildlife Refuge Management Series classification standard, GS-485, provides the most current and applicable criteria when evaluating land management type positions. This standard was issued in May 1990.

This guide will only be applicable until the Office of Personnel Management publishes more applicable criteria to evaluate BLM’s District/Field Manager positions.

Please note that the remainder of this guide describes factors that should be considered when applying the GS-485 standard. This guide is not intended to supersede the GS-485 standard and should not be applied separately and apart from the GS-485 standard.

CONCEPT OF THE GS-485 CLASSIFICATION STANDARD

The classification standard for the Wildlife Refuge Management Series, GS-485, uses the Factor Evaluation System (FES). FES is based on two ideas: (1) In the Federal Service, there are nine

job evaluation factors which are common to all General Schedule positions, and (2) the presence or absence of these nine factors can be measured with some degree of precision. The nine factors are:

1. Knowledge Required by the Position
2. Supervisory Controls
3. Guidelines
4. Complexity
5. Scope and Effect
6. Personal Contacts
7. Purpose of Contacts
8. Physical Demands
9. Work Environment

FES is a “point-factor” job evaluation method. This means that, when applying an FES standard, each of its nine factors is given a separate point score. Points are credited according to a fixed scale that permits only predetermined point values to be assigned. Each of the allowable point values is defined by a written “Factor Level Definition” (FLD). An FLD describes the levels of difficulty and responsibility associated with positions in a particular occupation. The nine separate factor scores are then added and converted to a final grade by using a standardized conversion table that prescribes a range of points for each grade level.

The nine factors are broad job characteristics that describe the nature of assignments and the level of responsibility associated with individual positions. Other job factors, such as a heavy workload volume or the personal qualifications and outstanding job performance of an incumbent employee are not considered. No credit is given to these kinds of job factors, even though they may be valid, because they either fluctuate over time or else require particularly subjective judgments on the part of an evaluator. The Federal classification system seeks to evaluate jobs based on factors that are as objective as possible, and as stable as possible.

As discussed in The Classifier’s Handbook (pages 8-10), a position must meet the full intent of a particular FLD before the point value for that FLD can be credited. Positions that meet some, but not all aspects of a higher FLD, are scored at the next lower FLD. This practice reflects OPM’s thinking that a grade level is a “band of difficulty”. The concept of a band of difficulty assumes that, among positions at the same grade level, there will be variations in the levels of difficulty of assigned work. In other words, a position can be assigned more difficult work than similarly situated positions without necessarily rising to the next higher-grade level.

EVALUATION OF INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

In order to evaluate a District/Field Manager’s position, apply the GS-485 standard using the following nine factors.

Factor 1, Knowledge Required by the Position

All District/Field Manager positions within the Bureau of Land Management are evaluated at the FLD 1-8 level.

Factor 2, Supervisory Controls

This factor measures the degree of official review and oversight that are routinely imposed over a public land manager's actions and decisions. It serves as an indirect measure of the land manager's placement in his or her organizational hierarchy. In the organizational context of the Bureau of Land Management, District/Field Manager positions are generally evaluated at FLD 2-4 or 2-5.

District/Field Managers' recommendations and decisions are almost universally accepted as technically sound, even though final approval may require formal action of others. This is indicative of level 2-5, however, not all Field Managers will attain the 2-5 level because at this level, the public lands and resource management programs must be reviewed by management officials (SES level) for potential influence on broad agency policies and objectives. The decisions of the District/Field Managers' are not being scrutinized; rather, it is the impact of those decisions on broad agency policies and objectives. At level 2-5, the delegation of full technical authority is accompanied by responsibility for a significant program or function and a larger number of these programs are managed at higher levels of intensity, and with higher levels of outside interest, than is the case at FLD 2-4.

Factor 3, Guidelines

At Level 3-4, Field Managers receive guidance primarily from the state office and bureau headquarters. This guidance comes through budget allocations, program policy documents, and periodic meetings and telephone discussions with the state office staff. The incumbent also uses guidance found in various laws, Federal court decisions, appeal decisions issued by the Interior Board of Land Appeals, and a variety of Federal regulations. Bureau Manuals outline processes and procedures on such issues as the preparation of Resource Management Plans, development of environmental assessments, the preparation of documents that deal with land acquisitions and exchanges, etc. The Standards and Guides used in healthful land assessments are available and adequate. Overall, guidelines used by the manager and staffs are fairly adequate. However, they must be interpreted in light of local situations. The manager is expected to use initiative in developing operating procedures and instructions which deviate from traditional methods or when developing new methods.

While the above guidelines are available to all managers, at level 3-5 District/Field Managers, District/Field Managers are characteristically required to engage in a number of programs that are exceptionally large or nationally significant. The guidelines are inadequate and District/Field Manager's actions may alter or establish standard concepts, theories, objectives, or previously established National policy and practices in public lands and resource management or may resolve previously unyielding problems.

Factor 4, Complexity

This factor measures, in OPM's words, "the nature, number, variety, and intricacy, of tasks, steps, processes, or methods in the work performed; the difficulty of identifying what needs to be done; and the difficulty and originality involved in performing the work." In terms of the GS-485 standard, this factor is used to assess the difficulties inherent in managing a particular unit, or group of units, of the public lands. Although information about the physical characteristics of the public lands being managed is considered under this factor, the intent is not to measure size or number of programs alone. Rather, this factor seeks to measure the intensity with which particular portions of the public lands are managed.

Because each District/Field Office area presents unique resource management challenges, different District/Field Manager positions will receive different scores for this factor. All District/Field Manager positions within the Bureau of Land Management are evaluated at the FLD 4-5 level, with some attaining level FLD 4-6.

When evaluating this factor, consider the characteristics of the public lands and resources being managed, the nature, size, scope, issues, and intensity of management of the District/Field Office programs, and how the complexity of management decisions compares to other District/Field offices. Consider the nature, scope, and intensity of the major BLM management issues, and the BLM programs in place and underway to address these issues. Also consider the degree of innovation of the District/Field Office programs.

The following kinds of information will be relevant for evaluating Factor 4:

- Information about the physical characteristics of the public lands such as acreage, topography, climate, soils, air quality, water quality, variety of flora and fauna, proximity to major metropolitan areas, land ownership patterns, and the relative fragility of the ecosystem.
- Information about the variety and the nature of programs currently in place. This can include information about District/Field office planning activities, timber harvest expectations, fire and fuels management history, rangeland management issues, current and projected recreational uses, visitor volume, presence or absence of protected species, presence or absence of significant cultural resources, cooperation in research studies, status of wildlife and fisheries programs, presence or absence of significant minerals management activities, status of infrastructure or engineering projects, impact of job training programs, impact of law enforcement activities, presence or absence of specialty designated areas (e.g., NCAs, Monuments), presence or absence of innovative demonstration projects, and any other unique aspects of the District/Field Office.

Prior classification reviews have shown that District/Field Managers can be evaluated at either FLD 4-5 or FLD 4-6.

FLD 4-5 describes a situation of pronounced complexity that requires a public lands manager to be, in OPM's words, "especially versatile and innovative." In the context of the Bureau of Land Management, this would describe a District/Field Office that includes a significant resource base and that carries out a large variety of resource management programs, with some, but not all,

requiring intensive management efforts. At this level, it is very difficult to balance extractive or intense uses of resources with long term conservation of the resource base.

Problems are complex in nature and are accompanied by many technical, administrative, public relations and socioeconomic implications that require in-depth analysis and decisions. The work includes varied duties requiring many different and unrelated processes applied to a broad range of activities. Positions at this level are responsible for integrated resource analysis, information development, and fact-finding, and for coordinating and planning activities that cover a broad multiple-resource program.

The work involves solving problems concerned with novel, undeveloped, or controversial aspects of public land and resource management. The problems are complex and difficult due to such characteristics as the abstract nature of the concepts, the existence of serious conflicts among competing interests and mandates, or inconsistencies between scientific requirements, program direction, and administrative requirements.

Assignments require District/Field Managers to be especially versatile and innovative in order to recognize possible new approaches, devise new or improved techniques or methods, or to anticipate future trends and requirements in resource uses and demands.

FLD 4-6 describes a situation that has all the complexities described in FLD 4-5 plus additional difficulties that arise from managing a larger number of more complex resource programs. In addition, a larger number of these programs are managed at higher levels of intensity, and with higher levels of outside interest, than is the case at FLD 4-5.

A District/Field Manager at FLD 4-6 is responsible for a resource base that is significant either nationally or in a major regional area (e.g., Great Basin, Desert Southwest, Pacific Northwest). Management of this significant resource base involves highly intensive efforts in an environment where many outside parties, including a number of nationally-based groups, make significant efforts to influence resource management decisions.

When compared to other District/Field Offices, a number of programs are exceptionally large or nationally significant and clearly require a level of management not typically found in other District/Field Offices.

At FLD 4-6, work is characterized by broad and intensive efforts involving several kinds of public land and resource management problems where some solutions have been found to be theoretically sound, accepted methods but such resolutions are in a state of change due to changes in legislation, administrative policy, scientific advances, or public expectations.

The District/Field Manager's actions may alter or establish standard concepts, theories, objectives, or previously established National policy and practices in public lands and resource management or may resolve previously unyielding problems.

Example of FLD 4-6:

District/Field Manager's at this level manage a highly visible and very complex resource base. All of the following elements of this level are present:

1. Size and complexity of the organization distinguish it from other District/Field offices (e.g., budget, FTE, formal interagency cross delegation, organizational elements at several sites).
2. The resources of the assigned District/Field Office include intensive multiple use management and conservation of five or more major resource program areas of significant magnitude relative to other District/Field offices or one or more major resources of outstanding magnitude and national prominence. Examples of major programs are: timber, range, recreation, minerals, lands, realty, Indian Trust, wildhorse and burro, watershed, fire, wildlife, and cultural.)
3. The programs are managed in an intense political, social, and economic environment (e.g., presidential initiatives, disproportionate social and economic impact of decisions, outside influence from national special interest groups, significant indian trust responsibilities, frequent need to contact the solicitors office, precedent setting and highly controversial, close proximity to large metropolitan area, intense public use.)

Factor 5, Scope and Effect

This factor measures, in OPM's words, the "purpose, breadth, and depth" of assigned work and the effect that the assigned work has on an organization's ability to successfully carry out its mission. In the context of the GS-485 standard, this factor measures the degree to which successful management of a portion of the public lands contributes to achieving national objectives at both the bureau and agency level. In the context of the BLM, this means objectives of the BLM and the Department of Interior (DOI).

This factor also includes consideration of the impacts of public lands and resource programs on local, regional, and national economies. Because individual District/Field offices impact national resource management goals and economic activity to varying degrees, different District/Field Manager positions will receive different scores for this factor.

When evaluating this factor, consider how District/Field office programs impact BLM and DOI goals at the national or international level and consider how this compares to the impact of other Districts/Field Offices within BLM. Also consider the breadth of the economic effects of the program decisions that the District/Field Manager must make.

Prior classification reviews have shown that District/Field Manager's can be evaluated at FLD 5-4, 5-5 or FLD 5-6.

At FLD 5-5, District/Field office programs clearly impact local and smaller regional areas. Many programs impact national BLM goals. One or two programs may have national significance for the DOI.

The purpose of the work is to isolate and define unknown conditions, resolve critical problems, and develop new approaches and guides for the management of the District/Field Office.

At this level, District/Field Manager's determine the validity and soundness of theories, standards, and guides for the improvement of resource uses, developments, and protection. They direct the development of management plans and operating procedures, They draw conclusions regarding public lands and resource management from a wide array of sometimes conflicting data, and provide expert advice and assistance to both higher and lower level management officials, technical specialists, user groups, and other interested parties.

The work has considerable influence on public lands and resource management within the state, and the development and/or effectiveness of resource management policies, programs, and practices.

At FLD 5-6, The work of the District/Field office impacts larger regional areas. A significant number of District/Field office programs have the potential to impact the achievement of national BLM/DOI goals, The District/Field Office programs may often be considered by other land management professionals to be trend-setters that establish precedents within the BLM. Some programs may even be of interest to national and international organizations involved in natural resource management.

At FLD 5-6, the purpose of the work involves planning, developing, and carrying out a vital BLM management program which is of unusual National level interest, exceptionally broad public interest, has significant socioeconomic implications, and precedent setting solutions.

Example of FLD 5-6:

A District/Field Manager is responsible for managing a diverse and complex resource base. Key programs are economically significant and environmentally sensitive. This results in continuing, high level internal and external attention paid to the on-going management because of the likely precedents that will be established for addressing the resource management issues involved.

For award of this level, all of the following elements are present:

- Socioeconomic Impact. The value of goods and services provided are regionally significant (e.g., social and economic stability of communities; dependency of industry on resources; effect of decisions on state, local, and tribal government programs; revenue generated to the federal government; protection of cultural and ecological values).
- Program leadership. Decisions affect broad agency policies, achieving agency program goals, and legislative recommendations and the programs of other natural resource agencies on a long-term or continuing basis.

Factor 6/7: Personal Contacts and Purpose of Contacts

This factor pairs two closely related aspects of communications: (1) what types of inter-personal interactions are necessary for successful job performance and (2) what results are expected from each interpersonal interaction.

This factor measures the degree to which a Federal employee must interact with individuals or organized groups. This factor also measures whether these interactions are usually straightforward, involving even exchanges of information among equal parties, or whether they are usually more controversial, involving negotiations with unwilling partners.

In the context of both the GS-485 standard and the BLM, this factor addresses the extent to which (and with what authority) a Federal land manager must deal with private companies, print and telecast journalists, environmental groups, local community organizations, local public officials, Departmental officials, researchers, members of Congress, and foreign dignitaries.

The distinctions that can be drawn with respect to this factor are subtle at best. Previous classification evaluations have shown that all District/Field Managers have contacts that require difficult negotiations concerning sensitive issues.

Fact finding for this factor will be most efficient when it concentrates on the type of individual or group encountered in a District/Field Manager's typical contacts, and the extent to which those individuals or groups have authority over, or influence with, large segments of the public.

When evaluating this factor, consider correspondence, e-mail logs, reports from higher-level managers, or any other information that identifies the level of the District/Field Manager's contacts and the segment of the public represented by the individual(s) making the contacts.

Prior classification reviews have shown that District/Field Manager positions can be evaluated at either FLD 3-d or FLD 4-d.

At FLD 3-d, contacts most frequently involve key officials who have local or regional impact. Contacts occur with national officials (e.g., national media or Congress) but such contacts are not as frequent or as intense as contacts with individuals or groups at local and regional levels.

At FLD 4-d, public contacts are driven by the exceptionally broad interest in the major and sensitive management issues of the public lands. The contacts are from a wider area, more frequently with high-level officials, and are more intense. The leadership and public contact skills required at this level are exceptional.

At FLD 4-d, contacts with such individuals as DOI staff, BLM headquarters officials, national media, Congress, key State government officials, and key officials of national business, public interest, or research organizations are more frequent, and often more intense.

Example of FLD 4-d: The District/Field Manager is responsible for

Frequent and intense contact with WO-BLM, national media, Congress, key state government officials, public interest groups over major and sensitive issues. National attention. Such

contacts require exceptional interpersonal communication and public contact skills. There is a high level of political interest present due to the complexity of the planning and the controversial resource issues (e.g., extraordinarily active timber management, intense mineral activity). National level special interest groups and media (environmental and industry) are present due to the conflicts and controversy associated with implementation of the resource management programs (competing interests) (e.g., Sierra Club, National Resource Defense Council, Audubon Society, Nature Conservancy, National Mining Association, National Association of Counties, National Cattlemen's Association, National Governor's Association). The manager frequently interacts with high levels of intergovernmental, tribal, or interagency coordination (senior staffs of Congress and its committees; senior staffs of Governors; Mayors of large cities; tribal presidents, chairs, and councils). Due to the bureau wide precedent setting nature of the work, the incumbent has frequent interaction with WO BLM Officials, the DOI, and the Solicitors office.

NOTE: The distinction between FLD 3-d and FD 4-d is driven mostly by the nature, intensity, and broad public interest in the issues of the public lands and resources being managed, rather than by the specific organizational setting.